

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:02 p.m. at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations in New York City

September 23, 2003

Mr. Secretary-General; distinguished members of the United Nations community; excellencies; ladies and gentlemen: America is honored that you all are here. Since the founding of the U.N. more than 50 years ago, my country has been proud to host this organization. I'm pleased to join you in opening the 58th session of the U.N. General Assembly. Mr. Secretary-General, I am grateful for your leadership, and I'm proud to call you friend.

The United Nations has suffered great loss in the cause of peace. The terrorist attack against the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad took the lives of 22 servants of peace, including Sergio de Mello, a man who dedicated his life to promoting human rights throughout the world. The people of my country mourn with you. We share your resolve to continue this important work. We gather in this city, at this Assembly, to meet urgent challenges of our time. We will work together to promote peace and human dignity.

Mr. Secretary-General, with admiration for you and with confidence in the future of this organization, I offer a toast to your leadership and to the United Nations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. at the United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to U.N. Special Representative for Iraq Sergio Vieira de Mello. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-General Annan. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a United States Reception in New York City

September 23, 2003

The President. Thank you all very much. Please be seated. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Not everyone has a seat.

The President. Unless you don't have a chair. [*Laughter*] For the sake of world harmony, I will give a short speech—[*laughter*—and then we can all go to bed. [*Laughter*]

First, I want to thank the American Museum of Natural History for their wonderful hospitality. We've got trustees here and the leadership of this fantastic place. It's such a wonderful opportunity for Laura and me and our delegation to show off one of the really fantastic landmarks of New York City. So on behalf of our delegation, thanks for your wonderful hospitality. It's a beautiful place to have a wonderful reception.

Laura and I and the Secretary are honored to welcome the Presidents and Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers and U.N. Ambassadors and anybody else who managed to sneak in tonight. [*Laughter*] We're glad you're here. It's been a fantastic reception for us, and thank you for coming.

I really want to say quickly a word about Kofi Annan. I admire his decency and his vision and his compassion for our fellow human beings. He's a great leader of the United Nations, and we're proud to call him friend.

Somebody whispered in my ear that Mayor Bloomberg is here. He is the mayor of New York City. Michael is the mayor of a great city. On September the 11th, this Nation saw the remarkable spirit of the people who live in this city. We'll always remember how our fellow citizens who happen to be New Yorkers instantly rallied to help their neighbors in need. New York's famous skyline was wounded, but its spirit remained steadfast.

In pursuing the terrorists, we honor the memory of the fallen, and we defend civilization itself. I want all the world leaders to remember that. In working to alleviate poverty, disease, and human suffering, we spread hope to millions, and we undermine the